

MONOLOGUES AND DUOLOGUES.

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MONOLOGUES AND DUOLOGUES

BY

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A BRIDGE PROBLEM.

Monologues and Duologues.

A BRIDGE PROBLEM.

A Monologue.

(Heard off, in agitated tones.)

YES, I daresay it's very wicked of me and all that, but I tell you, I wish I were dead. Yes, I do, and I daresay I shall live for centuries just because I don't want to. Oh, if only I could fade away with a broken heart, or something like that, as people do in novels. But I *shan't*, I *know* I *shan't*. I'm so healthy, that being miserable and wanting to die doesn't hurt me in the least. The worse I feel, the better I always look.

(Pause.) I wish you wouldn't try to comfort me, it only makes me feel worse.

If there is one thing that annoys me more than another, it is when people try to cheer me up when I want to be thoroughly miserable

(*Entering*) Oh, I've committed the most awful crime! I don't feel as though I should ever hold up my head again. I went out to play Bridge last night, and I revoked three times! Think of it! Three separate times in the same evening with the same partner, and he, oh merciful Heavens! was my fiancé. Imagine anything more humiliating if you can, than revoking three times in the presence of the man you are going to marry!

People are so silly. They keep telling me I shall get over it. As if I could get over doing a thing like that. I know I shall never be happy again, so it's no use my trying

Of course, everything is over between Harry and me now. He couldn't marry me

after what has happened, could he? Fancy marrying a woman who did things like that! Why, it's almost as bad as stealing, isn't it? I'm not sure Harry doesn't think it's worse. (*Sighing.*) It's so difficult nowadays to know what are the important things in life. I used to think that if you told the truth and all that sort of thing, you were all right, but now I know (*seriously*) that unless you can remember what's "out" at Bridge and always return your partner's lead, you're lost, absolutely lost! At least I was.

It all began when I forgot to return Harry's lead, at least, I didn't forget really, only I was so busy trying to remember all the rules he'd told me, that I never thought of anything else till it was too late, and I'd played a Diamond which was nobody's lead at all; and when I wanted to have it back and play a Heart instead, they wouldn't let me. They said Dalton wouldn't have allowed it. I don't know who Dalton is, but I sup-

he must be a woman or they wouldn't make such a fuss about him.

Well, after that Harry kept talking about this Dalton and her wonderful play, which made me very cross, because after all, I am engaged to him, and he ought to think I play better than she does, even if I don't. Anyhow, I got bothered and played a Spade instead of a Club. I didn't mean to, you know, only I was thinking of a lovely rhyme Harry had taught me about the Ace and the King, and never noticed what I was doing till I'd done it. And then Colonel Haydyn actually said I'd revoked; but I hadn't, you know, I'd only played the wrong card by mistake; and although I told them so several times, it wasn't any good, and Colonel Haydyn took three tricks away from us, and then said they'd won the rubber, which was really very unfair, wasn't it?

Well, it was my declare next, and I was frightened, I shook like a leaf. I never

was good at crises, you know, not even when I was at school. You want so much nerve to play Bridge well, and I haven't any at all. As soon as it's my declare, I just lose my head and forget everything.

As I was saying, I didn't know what to do, and although I tried to make Harry give me a hint as to what he wanted me to play, he wouldn't help me a bit. So first I looked at my cards, and then I looked at Harry, and then I said, "Not *quite* good enough," just like that. (*Indignantly.*) And would you believe it, Harry went Spades! Wasn't it aggravating of him! And I said, "Oh, Harry dear, I wanted you to go 'No Trumps,' I *did* think you'd understand," and d'you know, when I said that, everybody looked so queer, just as if I'd said something awfully improper. But I hadn't, had I? (*in annoyed tones.*) And then they quoted that Dalton woman again.

I was really quite frantic with worry by

that time, and I felt I must do something to please Harry and win some tricks, so when Mrs. Massingbird went "No Trumps," I doubled. I'd got seven Diamonds including the Ace, you know, but Colonel Haydyn had seven Clubs, and he got the lead almost at once, and we lost the game.

Oh, it was awful for me then! (*Appealingly.*) But wouldn't you have doubled if you'd had seven Diamonds, and lots of other cards in your hand besides? Why, anybody would—but we lost all the same. (*Dramatically.*) Then I understood what I'd never understood before, why men shoot themselves when they lose at cards. But I knew then—and I'm sure I should have been only too glad if only Harry had put a bullet through me then and there—but he didn't, he just looked at me till I squirmed all over, and there I had to sit and go on playing, knowing all the time
t I was making an awful mess of things.

I simply can't tell you all the mistakes I made! I know I trumped Harry's best card, when all the time I ought to have followed suit—that was the third revoke. Then I got my cards mixed up with the tricks and played the Queen of Hearts twice, and finally, when I was quite desperate, I walked three times round my chair to bring back my luck, and dropped all my cards, and never found one till it was too late to play it.

And that's how it all happened. I daresay it all sounds very funny to you, because you're not me, and haven't got to go on living when you don't want to. (*Pause.*) I think I shall go into a nunnery. They won't care whether I play Bridge well or not there. What a comfort that will be!

After all, Aunt Susannah was right. The world is quite a hollow place, and very disappointing to live in! Aunts make it more disappointing than it need be though—at

least mine does. She disapproves of theatres, and cards, and young men. I don't know which she thinks is worse, playing Bridge or being engaged to Harry. If ever she hears how I played and lost $8\frac{1}{2}d.$, she'll make my life a perfect burden to me. Not that anything matters now. If Harry doesn't love me, I don't care what happens. To think (*tearfully*) that we were going to be married in June, with six bridesmaids and a page to hold up my train, and now we shall never be married at all. (*Knock at door.*)

(*Irritably.*) Why is it, that whenever I look forward to having a good cry, someone always interrupts me. (*Goes to door. Receives note. Returns centre.*) From Aunt Susannah! Bother!

(*Reads*) My dear Niece,

Your dear mother has told me all. I am inexpressibly shocked to hear that you are in danger of becoming a confirmed gambler. In

case you do not realise where you are going, I enclose a copy of "The Downward Path," which I trust you will read carefully, especially the passages marked. I always mistrusted that young man, Henry Templeton. (*To audience*) "That's Harry." (*Reads*) No man who is a good card player will ever make a good husband, and my object in writing this letter is to urge you to put him away from you without delay.

Your deeply disappointed Aunt,

SUSANNAH HOPKINSON.

She writes as if Harry were wrong in the head. That's the worst of aunts. They can always be as rude as they like to you, without ever having to apologize for it afterwards. The world seems full of horrid people. (*Sighing.*) I suppose I had better write to Harry. I shouldn't like him to think I even expected him to marry me after all I've done. (*Takes pen and paper.*)

Perhaps when he finds I'm going to give up living like an ordinary person, and be good all day, he'll be sorry.

(*Writes.*) Dear, dearest Harry,

I do love you, though I did revoke three times last night. I know you can't care for me after that, so I'm going to be a nun, and wear a dress, and not bother you any more. Of course, I shan't be happy ever again, but that won't matter, because nuns aren't supposed to be. I shall always think of you all day long, and never, never forget you, and I'll try not to be jealous if you marry that Dalton woman you're always talking about. She may remember "what's out" better than I do, but I'm sure she'll never love you so much. Nobody could.

From your broken-hearted

MOLLY.

P.S.—I think I shall call myself Sister

Bridget, because it is all owing to Bridge that I'm going to be a nun.

(Putting letter in envelope.) There— now that's done. *(Meditatively.)* You know, I can't help feeling glad that Harry has found out what I am before he married me. It would have been so dreadful if he'd discovered afterwards. He might say I'd deceived him, and married him under false pretences, and then perhaps he'd have divorced me.

Now I must see about the Convent. I think I should like one near the sea, at Brighton or Southend, or somewhere where there is a band or a pier. *(Begins to cry.)* Oh, Harry, if you *knew* how miserable I am! *(Knock at door.) (Angrily.)* There! did you ever see anything like it? Directly I settle down and get my pocket handkerchief out, there is a knock at the door. *(Goes to door, and takes note.) (Looking at note.)* From Harry! Oh dear! I suppose he's written to

break our engagement off. He might have waited a little.

(Opens and reads.) Dearest little girl,

I was a brute last night, but you'll forgive me, won't you, and let me come and see you very soon?

From your remorseful

HARRY.

Isn't it a beautiful letter! You see, in spite of everything, he loves me. It just shows how noble he is. *(Happily.)* And we can be married in June after all. *(Sadly.)* If it weren't for the Bridge, I should be perfectly happy. But I know, directly I begin playing, I shall make all those dreadful mistakes again, and I can't expect him to forgive me a second time, can I?

If only Aunt Susannah knew, I hate the game as much as she does. *(Takes up her letter and turns over page.)* Why, here's a postscript I never noticed. *(Reads.)* If

you cannot bring yourself to give up this young man (as I strongly advise you should), I must insist on you giving me your solemn word of promise you will never touch a card again. Otherwise, I cannot sanction your marriage with him, and I shall do my best to persuade your mother to withhold her consent also.

(Triumphantly.) My Bridge Problem solved at last! Saved! and by an aunt! By forbidding me to play Bridge, Aunt Susannah has rid me of my only care. I need never revoke again! It seems almost too good to be true!

(Takes up pack of cards from table, and flings them across the room.) There, you little wretches, you nearly ruined my happiness, but you didn't quite. I'm going to marry Harry in spite of you, and be happy for ever and ever like the people in the Fairy Stories. *(Startling.)* I believe I hear Harry. *(Prepares to exit, suddenly stops and*

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comes centre again.) (To audience.) You won't mention anything I said just now about the Convent will you, because you see, I shan't want to be a nun or a monk or anything now. I'm going to be Harry's partner for life, and I shall never be bothered again, because when I don't know what to do, I shall just "leave it" to him, and whatever he "declares," I shall be "content."

EXIT.

THE GERM;

OR,

THE WORRIES OF A NERVOUS
MAN.

THE GERM;
OR,
THE WORRIES OF A NERVOUS
MAN.

A Monologue.

I SUPPOSE every man must have a hobby and every hobby must be a nuisance. Hence, according to Euclid, it follows that every man must be a nuisance.

My uncle's hobby is his health, and he takes as much interest in his constitution as other people do in their stamps and picture post cards. He is one of those people, you know, who are never really at ease unless they are either taking their temperature or

consulting a doctor, and his happiest moments are those he spends in bed, with his medical adviser in attendance, and a temperature sufficiently high to admit of his wiring to his friends and relatives to come and witness his sufferings. The *Lancel* is to him what the *Daily Mail* is to many others, and he is as well versed in the ways of germs and microbes as ladies are in the latest modes and fashions.

He has a rooted objection to fresh air, and has made a special study of draughts and atmospheric influences, in fact, I think I may say, without praising him unduly, that he is the smartest man I have ever met for ferreting out a draught. For one thing he is always on the look-out for it, and so has a pull over the rest of us who sometimes think of other things. This talent of his comes in useful now and then, however, as he can often trace a cold in this way, and, as everybody knows, a cold is a much more

interesting thing to have when you can tell people how you caught it. .

But *the* event of my uncle's life was the attack of influenza which laid him low one spring several years ago. For three blissful weeks he had the felicity of being waited on by two nurses and visited twice a day by his doctor. On one never-to-be-forgotten night, he was actually in the proud position of lying at death's door, with three doctors standing over him in consultation as to the best means of removing him from that door. That was indeed a great occasion for him, and one to which he is never tired of referring.

He achieved quite a reputation as an invalid by this attack of influenza, and I never knew a man extract so much pleasure out of an illness as he did. He fairly swelled with pride when he described his ailments, and he had a most effective little cough which he always trotted out whenever anyone happened to be by. Finally, he wrote my mother

such a pathetic account of himself and his sufferings that she was stricken with pity, and immediately asked him down to stay with us and recruit his shattered health.

He accepted the invitation and came a week later. I met him at the station. He arrived in a very pessimistic frame of mind, having had the misfortune to travel down with a man who insisted on having the window partly open, and a baby who developed whooping-cough as soon as the train had started. To add to his misfortunes, the train did not stop till he reached his destination, so there was no possibility of his changing into another compartment.

The recital of his woes lasted till we reached home, where we found my mother awaiting us.

"Welcome, Edward, welcome!" she cried as soon as she caught sight of him, and added: "I do hope you are better."

"Better!" he exclaimed in annoyed tones,

"I shall never be better. The grave is the only cure for my disease."

"Oh, surely not," murmured my mother.

"When you have been as ill as I have," he retorted angrily, "you will not wish to live."

After that we went in to tea, and I suppose it was the thought that it might be his last that made him make such a good one.

After tea he regaled us with a minute account of his illness, and explained again how exceedingly improbable it was that he would live much longer. He then read us an article on "germs," and we discussed operations and diseases generally for the rest of the evening.

We were not sorry when, at 10 o'clock, he announced his intention of retiring to bed. My mother thereupon lighted his candle, and was about to imprint a good-night kiss upon his brow, when he waved her hastily away. "Kissing," he observed severely, "is a most

unnecessary, not to say dangerous, form of salutation. If you were in the habit of reading the medical papers, you would know that all sorts of loathsome diseases are conveyed by means of the lips. In my opinion, this pernicious custom is largely responsible for the rapid spread of disease in this country. If I had my way, kissing would be put down by law and made a punishable offence."

You will see from this that my uncle is one of those people who have never been young.

At breakfast the next morning he appeared wrapped in gloom, and I ventured to express a hope that he had slept well.

"Slept!" he exclaimed; "*I never sleep,*" and we somehow felt that we ought not to have expected it of a man in his condition. Considering that his digestion was irretrievably impaired, he made a very good breakfast, and we afterwards left him peacefully reading the paper.

My mother, entering the room half an hour later, found him feverishly clutching the thermometer, with a stricken look on his countenance.

"108 point 5," he murmured, catching sight of her.

"But it can't be, Edward."

"I tell you it is," jerking the thermometer violently up and down.

"But you'd be dead if it were!"

"I daresay I shall be dead in a few minutes, if you'll only wait."

At the end of half an hour he was still alive, and it was then discovered that the thermometer was out of order. The rest of the morning passed uneventfully enough, save that he discovered later that he had been sitting with his back to an open window for fully an hour without knowing it.

The discovery caused him considerable uneasiness, and he sat and shivered until lunch-time, in anticipation of the chill which

he had made up his mind would be the result of his rash action.

At lunch, however, a fresh complication arose. My mother sneezed. My uncle frowned and moved his seat further away. This made my mother nervous and she sneezed again.

"Elinor, you have a cold," he observed, in displeased accents.

My mother tried to deny it.

"Nonsense, I say you have a cold. Charles, run upstairs to my room, and on the left-hand corner of the chest of drawers you will find a small green bottle. Bring it to me. Your mother shall have a dose at once."

"But, Edward——"

It was no good, the bottle was fetched, and my uncle proceeded to draw the cork.

"But, Edward, it says it is for horses," protested my mother, reading the direction on the label of the bottle.

"Well, and what of that pray? Is that any reason why it should not be good for you, too? My horses derived much benefit from it last spring, and it will probably have the same effect upon you as it had upon them."

My mother took a dose, and shortly afterwards left the room.

"I expect Elinor is in for a bad cold," said my uncle gloomily. "I don't suppose she wears flannel next her skin. Women are such fools where their health is concerned. It is most inconsiderate of your mother to have a cold just now when I am in such a delicate state of health. And all for want of a little ordinary care! Most inconsiderate!" and he went off muttering to himself to take his temperature again.

Under the influence of the horse mixture, my mother's cold increased rapidly, and my uncle's annoyance increased in like proportions.

"People have no business to be ill," he

said testily, for illness in others irritated him beyond measure, and he was so much upset that he went out without an umbrella and came back wet and indignant, in a cab.

"You can't do anything in this cursed climate," we heard him murmuring to himself as he went upstairs to change his clothes. "Who would have thought it would have rained to-day? I shall suffer for this! I shall suffer for this!"

We tried to cheer him by telling him he would be all right if he took some quinine, but the thought that he might not have to suffer for it after all, seemed to depress him, so, that we desisted.

"It's no use telling me I shall be all right," he objected. "I know differently. One of these days I shall die."

"That is so with all of us," I remarked.

"Ah! but my case is different. With a heart like mine——" and he tapped himself significantly.

"What's wrong with it?"

"It beats so! It beats so!"

"Jolly good thing for you too, old man," retorted my Cousin Dick.

My uncle has never liked Dick since, and when next he sent us all presents of a more or less hygienic character, Dick was not among the recipients of his bounty.

What we went through during that awful time, no one will ever know! As my mother did not possess the digestion of a horse, my uncle's patent remedy continued to disagree with her, and by the time she had lost her cold she had seriously impaired her digestion.

Under my uncle's supervision we hunted microbes all day long, and lived in an atmosphere of mingled eucalyptus and carbolic. Himself and his ailments formed the chief, I might say, our only, topics of conversation, and all the most ghastly and private details of illness were discussed with a relish at each meal.

As for us, we lost our appetites and our nerve into the bargain.

But relief came at last, and from a most unexpected quarter.

We were sitting round the fire one evening reminiscencing of all the various ailments we had suffered from at various times.

"I remember," my mother was saying, "when I had diphtheria. The doctor insisted on my being removed to your room, Edward, so as to be as far away from the others as possible."

"What!" shrieked my uncle, springing to his feet.

"Oh, I was very comfortable there, and we had to take precautions."

"D'you mean to say you've let me sleep in a room where a case of diphtheria, *diphtheria* of all things, too, has been nursed, and never told me?"

But that was several years ago," said my mother soothingly.

"If you had studied medicine as I have, you would know it is impossible to destroy the diphtheritic germ once it has entered a house. The house should be pulled down at once."

"But nobody has had it since."

"That has nothing to do with it. You may escape for years, and you may develop it any moment. You, or I, or any of us may be sickening for it now. Oh! Good Heavens! think of it! Think of it!"

We did think of it and it did not trouble us much, but my uncle left the next day and has not visited us since. We have not had the house pulled down and he is still expecting one of us to develop diphtheria, and periodically sends us cuttings from the *Lancet* concerning that fell disease and its symptoms.

On the whole, we are rather grateful to the diphtheritic germ, in view of what it did for us.

Shortly after he left us, he sent us each a

present of a flannel vest, together with the information that he was still very unwell, and that the grave was his only cure.

I have only to add that that was ten years ago, and that he is still living, and enjoying his various ailments as much as ever.

EXIT.

AN OLD MAN'S POLITICS.

AN OLD MAN'S POLITICS.

TOLD BY AN OLD COTTAGER OF EIGHTY-TWO.

A Monologue.

“I DON’T ’old with women nor Polytics. They’re tricky things, both of ’em, an’ best left alone. I’ve been married upwards of three or four times (I can’t mind me which at the moment), so I oughter know summat of the women, an’ as for the Polytics——! Well, I’ll just tell you what ’appened in our village last year!

I lives up Drumbleton way. ’Tain’t ’xactly what you’d call a big place, but we’ve got a shop, an’ a public ’ouse, an’ a church there, so we ’as all we wants.

But about them Polytics. 'Twas about the time as my last wife was took, an' I was feelin' a bit dull an' mopey like; not as I wanted 'er back, in course, but I sorter missed 'er noise an' 'er cackle. An' just then, a gentleman what called 'isself Mr. Smithson, come down to stay at Drumbleton. Well, in course lots of 'em do that, so we didn't think nothin' of it at fust, but this one, 'e was diff'rent from the rest. 'E didn't paint, an' 'e didn't write books, an' 'e didn't do nothin' but talk. 'E *could* talk too! You should 'ave 'eard 'im! Why, 'e beat the women at it! It don't sound likely, but 'e did.

We didn't know what to make of 'im at fust, an' Joe Saunders 'e thought as 'e must be wrong in the 'ead, seein' as 'e didn't paint nor nothin', an' we felt quite sorry for 'im, 'e seemed so worritted about everythin'. An' after we got to know 'im a bit, 'e told us as 'ow e'd got the Empire to manage, an' 'ow terrible bothered 'e was about it, becos' things

wasn't goin' as they should. Well, when we 'eard that, we weren't surprised as 'e should seem fretty-like, becos' in course, it was a big job for 'im to 'ave to do by 'isself; an' when 'e asked us if we'd 'elp 'im, we all promised as we would. Oh! e was a cunnin' one, e was!

Well, as I was sayin', 'e used to spend all 'is days talkin'. The things 'e told us! you never 'eard the like! All about England, an' forriners, an' suchlike. We be quiet folk down our way, an' we 'adn't heard much about England afore, though in course we knew we lived there; an' we didn't rightly understand what they did in Parlyment, though we did once 'ear as 'ow they was goin' to take away our public 'ouse from us, which upset us werry much.

We be pretty forchunate at Drumbleton with the crops an' such like, so we 'adn't thought to trouble our 'eads about Parlyment till Mr. Smithson told us what wicked things

they was a-doin' there be'ind our backs, as you may say, an' us knowin' nothin' about it. You never 'eard of such goin's on, as 'e told us of, in all your born days! 'E said as 'ow Parlyment was gettin' everythin' made in forrin' countries, 'stead of in England, which I s'pose accounts for the bread bein' so stale now and then, secin' as it 'as to come such a long way. Mary 'Iggins used to think it was the baker's fault, which I knew it never was, an' all the time it was them dratted Germans.

It made me fair sick to 'ear 'ow them forriners were be'aving—takin' the bread out of our werry mouths, as you may say, an' when Mr. Smithson said what a scand'lous shame it was of 'em, I shouted: "'Ere, 'ere!" becos' I ain't one to be put upon.

You should 'ave 'eard 'im go on about the Colonies, too! 'E did seem put out about *them*, 'cos 'e said if we didn't take care, we'd

lose 'em all. I've a nevvv out in Africy what sends me a bit of money now an' then, an I didn't want 'im to get lost, so I told Mr. Smithson as 'ow I 'oped 'e'd see 'is way to keep them Colonies for us for a bit. Mr. Smithson said that what we wanted was Protection, which I'd thought, for a long time, 'cos' the perlice ain't 'arf sharp in our parts, an' I'm allus afeared of bein' murdered in my bed, though what that 'ad to do with keepin' them Colonies, as Mr. Smithson seemed to think, I don't know.

An' then 'e went on to tell us that the reason why all these things were 'appenin', was becos' we'd all been asleep, which I up an' said wasn't true, becos' we'd all been listenin' as 'ard as we could, an' when 'e saw 'e'd made a mistake, 'e tried to apolergize by sayin' as 'e was only a figger of speech, tho' what 'e meant by that, I'm sure I don't know.

Not that I was s'prised at things goin'

wrong. What can you expect what with moty-cars, an' airboats, an' suchlike, which I never will believe a Christian country oughter 'ave.

But the thing 'e told us that fetched us most, was about our baccy. We all likes a pipe now an' then, an when we 'eard as we were bein' charged threepence for what we only ought to 'ave been charged an 'alfpenny, we began to think England must be in a werry bad state. An' 'e said them dratted 'ipocrites achsully made out as it was the "custom," an' said as 'ow takin' our money like that was their "duty," but I calls it stealin' an' so did Joe Saunders.

Well, Mr. Smithson said that if we'd join some Society as e belonged to, we'd get all our baccy fer nothin', an' "do' them forriners into the bargain. We were goin' to get a lot of other things for nothin' too, 'cordin' to 'im, tea an' sugar an' I don't know what else, but it was the baccy what took me, an' I paid

sixpence an' joined that society at once, an' so did Ned Blake an' Joe Saunders.

In course, we sorter 'oped as we'd get our baccy for nothin', soon as we'd paid our sixpence, without no waitin', but Mr. Smithson 'e said as we couldn't 'ave that till we'd got the laws altered, an' we couldn't get them altered till more people 'ad joined 'is Society; an' when we heard that, Ned an' I we went round an' we got a lot of people to join.

"I'm a reformer, I am," says I, when I meets Jim Brodie.

"What's that?" says 'e.

"Well, I don't rightly know," says I; "but it means gettin' your baccy fer nothin'."

"I'm with you then," says 'e, an' 'e went an' paid 'is sixpence like a man.

Well, after we'd got nearly all the village to join, Mr. Smithson said as 'ow 'e thought we oughter 'ave a meetin', which we quite agreed, 'cos we thought it was quite time we 'ad our baccy

“ ‘Ow long ’ll we ’ave ter wait ? ”

“ That depends on ’ow long the present Government are in. ”

“ But I’ll be dead afore then, ” says I, “ ’cos I’m eighty-two now, ” an’ Joe ’e ’itched up ’is trousers ’igher still, an’ Ned ’e tightened ’is belt

“ Think of your posterity, ’ says one of ’em laffin’ fit to bust ’isself.

“ I don’t know who you’re referring to, ” says I, “ but I want my baccy.

An’ then we ’eard as it was all a take-in, an’ that we weren’t goin’ to get our baccy for years an’ years, not till the Government “ went out, ” they said, meanin’ dead, I s’pose, an’ Mr. Smithson ’e ’ad the impidence to make out as ’ow ’e’d never said as ’ow we’d ’ave our baccy for nothin’. ’E said all ’e meant was as we’d ’ave it cheaper, an’ all the gents said as we must ’ave made a mistake, which I won’t never believe, becos I ’eard ’im say as ’ow we’d ’ave our baccy for nothin’, myself.

An' when we knew as 'ow we'd 'ave to wait till all them chaps in Parlyment were dead, an' then very likely not get our baccy for nothin' but only a bit cheaper, we were in a takin'! an' Joe 'e winked at me, an' I winked at the others an' we all went out of the Infants' School an' waited round the corner by the church, an' when we saw Mr. Smithson come along, we 'eld a little meetin' of our own.

Mr. Smithson 'e did look scared when 'e saw us all there, an' Joe e' could 'ardly keep 'is 'ands off 'im.

"Where's my baccy?" says Bill, fingerin' 'is pocket knife in a lovin' sort of way, an' then we all set to an' told 'im what we thought of 'im. An' all the time, 'e just stood there, an' didn't say nothin', though it wouldn't 'ave mattered if 'e 'ad, becos no one would never 'ave 'eard 'im with the noise we were makin'.

An' presently Jim 'e thought of the pond,

what was forchunately quite 'andy, an' 'e passed the word round, an' afore Mr. Smithson knew where 'e was, 'e was in the pond, an' we give 'im a reg'lar duckin'. Lawks! 'ow 'e did 'oller! I can 'ear 'im now!

An' that's all about it, an' we ain't 'eard no more about the Empire from that day to this, an' I don't s'pose we ever shall. An' I ain't meddled with Polytics since.

EXIT.

THE EXTRAVAGANCE OF BEING
ECONOMICAL.

THE EXTRAVAGANCE OF BEING ECONOMICAL.

A Monologue.

ECONOMY! Oh, yes, I can give you plenty of information on that subject. Did I not give the whole of my attention to trying to master the art last Spring? The memory of that time remains with me still. Whatever else I forget, I shall never, never forget that awful month during which we tried the heart-rending and hitherto unknown experience of saving money instead of spending it.

Whatever our faults as a family may be, we never do things by halves. A week after we had received the intelligence that

we were practically penniless, we had disposed of our house to a friend, dismissed the servants and settled ourselves in cheap and uncomfortable lodgings ; we had even given away the dog in order to save the license.

We afterwards wished that we had been a little less precipitate in our methods, but it was too late to alter then, so we settled down to do without all the things we really wanted, as Pauline said that was the only way to economize properly.

There are three of us by the way, and we are sisters Pauline being the eldest, considers herself the head of the family. She isn't exactly clever but she's very ingenious and thinks of lots of things that other people don't She is a very comfortable sort of person to live with, because she never gets depressed or worries when things don't turn out as she expects.

So, as I said before, we set to work to

do without everything, or at least nearly everything. We gave up the luxury of having regular meals and lived on tea and bread and butter for a fortnight, but as this diet had the effect of making us always hungry and invariably cross, we went back to mutton and milk puddings. We walked miles in the pouring rain in order to save a twopenny tram fare, and thereby not only ruined our clothes and caught severe chills, but had to have the doctor, as well as a new outfit.

We could not of course entirely deny ourselves the luxury of clothes, but we did what we could by making them ourselves. We had not had any previous practice in the art, and, as the dressmaker had to be called in afterwards to re-make them, we did not save much. Then having decided to sell all our old clothes, we had a grand turn out, and arranged all the things we intended to keep in one heap, and all the

things we meant to sell in another. I suppose we did not make it quite clear to the woman who came to buy them which was which, for, when she was well out of range, we found she had taken the wrong heap away with her, and we were left with nothing to wear but all the things we had previously discarded. Most people would have been disheartened by this, but not so Pauline; failure only tended to increase her zeal, and she set to work with renewed energy to try and devise some simple and effective means by which we could amass a fortune.

Finally she came to the conclusion that our best plan would be to open a laundry. We did not possess any definite knowledge on the subject of laundries, but, as Pauline remarked, everything must have a beginning, so we started by "tubbing" our own clothes for practice. We spent the whole of one morning washing everything we could lay

our hands on. Fortunately, some of our best things were mislaid, and so escaped the awful fate that befell the rest.

I will not say much about our efforts in this direction, except to remark that we decided not to open a laundry after all, and we spent the whole of the next morning trying to coax a little colour back into our blouses by means of Dolly Dye. We had never used Dolly Dye before, and I don't suppose we ever shall again, but as it was against our principles to waste anything, we cut the blouses up and made them into artistic coverings for the fern pots.

I suppose it was owing to these misfortunes that our weekly bills mounted up so, and one day when there were rather more clouds in our sky than we cared to contemplate, Pauline announced that in future a strict account must be kept of our expenditure. Oh, we went through many trying experiences just then, but I *do* think that the keeping of

those accounts was the most trying of them all! We never got to bed before twelve, and, as we could never remember what we had spent, we always had a deficit for which we could never account.

It was after we had spent the whole of one evening trying to account for sixpence-halfpenny which was subsequently found under the table-cloth, that Pauline suddenly had an inspiration.

Living with people who are subject to inspirations is not so elevating as you might imagine. It has the effect of making you do things in a hurry which you would never do at leisure. On this occasion Pauline found her inspiration in a newspaper, where her eye lighted on an advertisement which announced that immense sums of money were offered for waste paper. "Fancy that!" she cried, "Waste paper! and we never thought of it before!"

The idea charmed us! When we were not

EXTRAVAGANCE OF BEING ECONOMICAL.

collecting paper, we were talking of what we should do with the money we got for it.

Paper was so common that of course we could get any amount of it, and there would be no end to our wealth! Truly, our enthusiasm knew no bounds!

How we worked at our scheme! We hoarded every scrap of paper we could find. We bought things in shops in order to get the paper they were wrapped in. We picked up pieces surreptitiously in the streets, and we even bribed little boys to help us. We collected old newspapers from the seats of railway carriages, and finally went to the length of keeping tram tickets.

According to the advertisement, the paper was to be sent away in a sack. This seemed a needless extravagance to us, but we dared not risk our chances by failing to conform to the regulations, so we sallied forth and bought a nice roomy one for eightpence-halfpenny.

Then came the delightful task of filling the sack, though this did not prove quite so delightful when we discovered how much it would hold. However, we managed to get it pretty nearly full by adding a few letters and some note paper which happened to be lying on the table just then. We didn't notice at the time that some of the letters had never been opened. That only dawned upon us afterwards when it was too late to rescue them, and we have been wondering ever since what those letters contained.

When all our preparations were complete, we sewed up the sack and tied it round with a nice piece of scarlet ribbon (just to show that we weren't ordinary people, you know), and then we started to carry it downstairs. This turned out to be more difficult than we had expected, and before we had finished, a good deal of the paper was missing from the walls. The stair case had to be re-painted and the walls

EXTRAVAGANCE OF BEING ECONOMICAL

repapered afterwards, which rather added to the expense.

No sack, even if the paper in it had been bank-notes, could have had a better send-off. We ourselves took it down to the station in the hotel 'bus, and there saw it deposited in the luggage van with our own eyes.

I can't tell you how the days that followed passed. I can only say that we lived in dreams of the future.

Imagine our excitement when, after five days of weary waiting, a letter arrived bearing the Birmingham post-mark. We trembled so in our agitation, we could hardly open the letter. When we were sufficiently calm to do so, the following announcement met our eyes :

			<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Allowed for Sack of Paper	...	1	8	
Less Cost of Carriage	...	1	10	
			<hr/>	
Balance Due2
			<hr/>	

Kindly oblige by remitting this amount at your earliest convenience.

We gazed at it in horrified silence for a few moments.

"And the sack cost $8\frac{1}{2}d.$!" murmured somebody.

"And the 'bus $6d.$!"

"And the ribbon $4\frac{1}{2}d.$!"

"Making a deficit of $1s. 9d.$ altogether!"

"A *deficit*!" reiterated Pauline.

And we all sat down and wept bitterly. To think that all our labour and all our planning had ended in that! Napoleon himself, when he arrived at St. Helena, did not feel more crushed than we did at that moment. Nor was this all. For we afterwards discovered that, in our zeal and enthusiasm, we had, in a moment of mental aberration, added all our receipted bills to swell our store of paper. Now, when the gasman, or the coalman, or the grocer send in their accounts for the second time, however sure we may be that we have paid them, it is useless for us

to say so, for, alas! we cannot produce the proof.

So ended our last and greatest effort to economize. Even Pauline's dauntless spirit was crushed by this final blow.

Shortly afterwards a distant relative died and left us her money, and it was unanimously decided that for the future we would leave economy to those who could afford to practise it, and live once more as rational human beings.

EXIT.

THE QUESTION SOLVED.

THE QUESTION SOLVED.*

A Duologue.

DOLLY.

CHRISTINE.

Scene: Any room. *Time:* Morning.

DOLLY (*seated at piano, exercising her voice*)

If no one ever marries me, and I
don't see why they should——

CHRIS. (*entering from back*). My dear, if
you make a noise like that, you may
be pretty sure they won't.

DOLLY (*in her shrillest tones*). For nurse
says I'm not pretty——

CHRIS (*sotto voce*). You needn't have gone
to nurse for that.

* Reprinted by kind permission of the Editor of "The Penny
Pictorial."

DOLLY (*triumphantly*). And I'm seldom very good (*in speaking voice*). I *will* get that high note, if I die for it (*Attacks note several times.*)

CHRIS. You probably *will* die, if you go on like that, and if you don't stop this minute, I declare I'll leave the house. The doctor told me only the other day that my nerves were in a very bad state, and I simply can't stand it.

DOLLY (*shutting piano with a bang 'and facing Chris.*). Now, what on earth has made you so cross to-day, my dear? Here have I been *wearing* myself out in trying to entertain you, and you haven't even the grace to pretend to be interested.

CHRIS. Well, you sent for me this morning just as I was in the middle of a Bridge problem—most awkward it was!—and *then*, when I throw on my clothes and rush round to see you, all you do is to

give me all the reasons vocally, why no one is going to marry you.

DOLLY. Gracious! I'd quite forgotten—what a good thing you reminded me—I always do forget important things. (*In tragic tones*) My dear, I'm terribly upset this morning; in fact, I'm nearly wild with worry.

CHRIS. Well, it seems to suit you, anyway.

DOLLY. You don't know—I shouldn't be at all surprised if I didn't do something desperate.

CHRIS. (*alarmed*). Good gracious! Wait—till I'm out of the house, will you, dear?

DOLLY (*rising and standing before Chris*). Christine, do I look different this morning?

CHRIS. Well, no, I can't say you do. Your hair is a little wilder than usual, and your skirt is a trifle crooked, but still—

DOLLY (*excitedly*). Don't talk about

I don't care if I never wear them again.
The question is—*Am I, or am I not,*
in love?

CHRIS. (*surprised*). What?

DOLLY. As I *keep* saying, he proposed to me last night, and it was all very uncomfortable, and I've sent for you to ask your advice. You really *might* attend.

CHRIS. My good Dolly, this is the first time you've said a word about it, but go on—who is he? Where does he come from? Has he really proposed?

DOLLY. It's Captain Maddox — Gerald Maddox. Isn't it a *lovely* name?

CHRIS. That depends. Personally I should always be thinking of haddocks when I was with him, but *go on—How did he propose?*

DOLLY (*confusedly*). Well, I don't know—that is, he didn't exactly—at least, I'm not sure, at least—well, I suppose he *did*.

CHRIS. If he 'proposed to you like that, I'm not at all surprised you aren't sure.

DOLLY. My dear, it was all very disappointing. You know I always thought a proposal must be a *lovely* thing to have, but it wasn't at all. It was *dreadful*! For first he couldn't make up his mind to begin, and there was an *awful* silence between us—and I simply slid about on my chair with fright. I did feel so *queer*—I simply longed for one of those nasty earthquakes they've been having in India to come along and bury us both. And he held my hand, and I held my breath—and then, just as he began to ask me if I loved him, Sarah came in to know if we wanted the lights! and I said *no*! couldn't she see I was engaged; and Sarah, horrid girl, tittered, and said she was very sorry, but she'd no idea till I

told her. And I went crimson, and when she'd gone, Gerald began all over again, but, really, I was so confused and flustered by that time, and he was such a long time coming to the point, and I knew some one would be sure to burst in just at the important moment, that I told him to come again to-morrow. And, oh! Christine. do you think I love him? Do I look as though I were in love?

CHRIS. (*glancing at her critically*). I can't say you do.

DOLLY. I'm very irritable; I wonder if that is a good sign?

CHRIS. You don't seem very depressed.

DOLLY. No, I'm not, and I eat more than ever. I know in books people don't, but then nothing ever seems to prevent my feeling hungry.

CHRIS. I don't think you'll waste away on his account.

DOLLY. Oh! I wish Gerald would steal something or commit some awful crime!

CHRIS. Good gracious; why?

DOLLY. Because then I should be sure that I didn't love him (*sighs*). Oh dear! I wish I knew.

CHRIS. (*after a pause, starting up suddenly*). I've got an idea. *Now listen to me.* I'll bet you your new sables that I'll prove to you, within—well, we'll say a week—that you are in love with this young man of yours.

DOLLY. My dear Christine, how do you propose to do that?

CHRIS. Never mind, but I will.

DOLLY. Well, you're welcome to my sables if you can, I'm sure. But——

CHRIS. (*briskly*). Now let's talk of something else. I'm sick of this subject.

DOLLY. But there's nothing else to talk about, at least, I can't think of anything—and I can't see how—unless you

ask me questions and discuss it with me—you're ever going to find out if I'm in love or not.

CHRIS. Now, my dear Dolly, that is enough. If you can't think of anything else to talk about, I can (*picks up paper*). Any news to-day?

DOLLY. I don't know, I never read it, but Gerald says that——

CHRIS. I tell you I won't have his name mentioned. We are going to forget him.

DOLLY. I wish we could!

CHRIS. Well, I can. Let me see (*taking up paper*). "The Martyrdom of a Suffragette," rather a good name for a book, isn't it?

DOLLY. Gerald says he thinks *every* woman ought to have a vote.

CHRIS. Oh, then he had better read "The Unwomanliness of Woman," by Sir Francis Montague. (*Reads.*) "London's Latest Craze." "Revival of Ancient

Biblical Dances." (*Speaking.*) Judging by what we hear of the salaries paid to the bare-footed Sisterhood, it appears that it is more profitable to dance in palaces than to dabble in politics. (*Pause, while CHRIS. looks through paper.*) Let me see, Mrs Smith wants a good plain cook--not too old, with good——

DOLLY (*interrupting*). Do read out something nice—aren't there any murders or marriages?

CHRIS. (*glancing down paper*). No, people seem to be too busy for either. Mr. Jones has been fined for driving his motor down—— (*stops suddenly.*) Oh, how awful! (*in horrified tones.*)

DOLLY. What on earth have you got hold of there?

CHRIS. (*nervously*). Oh, nothing. (*Reads intently.*)

DOLLY. Don't tell lies, Christine, my love.

You know you've at last come across something really exciting——

CHRIS. (*putting paper down*). Nonsense. How's your aunt?

DOLLY (*decidedly*). I won't utter another syllable till you tell me what's in that paper.

CHRIS. Dolly, how silly you are.

DOLLY. Now, out with it, or I'll find it out for myself (*tries to seize paper*).

CHRIS. (*holding paper firmly*). Don't, Dolly dear. You'd really better not read it—it would only make you unhappy.

DOLLY. *What on earth do you mean?* I can't have anything to do with me (*takes paper, and reads*). Well, I can't see anything—show me where it is.

CHRIS. I—I'd really rather not, Dolly; and, after all, it's a good thing you're out of it; it shows what a bad man he must be.

DOLLY (*gives Chris. paper*). Are you mad? *Read it, I tell you.*

CHRIS. Well, if you insist (*reads*), "A marriage has been arranged, and will shortly take place between Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Frederick Harmon, K.C.B., and Captain Maddox, only son of General Maddox, of The Mount, Suffolk," and——

DOLLY (*interrupting*). Christine, it can't be true! What are you talking about?

CHRIS. I didn't want to tell you, Dolly, you know——

DOLLY. I don't believe it, it's all a lie. The paper never does put things right. Christine, say it isn't true.

CHRIS. How can I? Besides, you know you never loved him——

DOLLY. I did, I tell you—I loved him better than anyone else in the world, and I shall never get over it. I'll never trust a man again. They are a bad lot. I've a good mind to enter

a monastery and wear all my old clothes
(sobs).

CHRIS. Perhaps it isn't true after all, dear.
Mistakes do happen, you know.

DOLLY (*excitedly*). I know it's true. Of course it's true. Give me the paper. (*Takes paper.*) Where is it? (*Almost tears paper in her efforts to find notice.*) (*Suddenly she sees CHRIS. laughing.*) How can you sit there and laugh when I am so unhappy? It's too bad of you. You won't even help me to find the place, and I shall have to look till Doomsday for it.

CHRIS. (*laughing*). Yes, my dear, I think you will, and you wouldn't find it then. (*Changing tone.*) Hand over those sables, my dear. I think you'll admit I've won my bet.

DOLLY (*tearfully*). I don't know what you mean.

CHRIS. Now, Dolly, love, don't be angry—

I wanted to prove to you that you were in love with Captain Maddox, so I just made up that notice about his marriage.

DOLLY. How could you be so horrid as to upset me like that! But there, I knew all along it was all right—I never believed it for a moment. All the same, I'm simply longing to see Gerald. I do hope he won't be long.

CHRIS. (*laughing*). And you're the girl who told me ten minutes ago you weren't sure if you were in love or not.

DOLLY. Well, I'm quite certain now, and you're welcome to my sables and anything else you like. (*Bell heard off.*) Christine, that's Gerald. I'm sure it is. Come and be introduced to him.

EXEUNT CHRIS. AND DOLLY.

HOW I WENT SHOPPING.

HOW I WENT SHOPPING.*

(A Christmas Monologue.)

As I always says, Christmas is Christmas, and so long as it only comes once a year, you must put up with all the fluster and mess that comes with it. Not but what I hate fluster and mess as a rule, but when you see the shops looking so gay, and everybody looking so spry, and the postman nearly smothered in parcels, well, to my mind it makes up for a good deal.

This year though, I didn't feel so Christmassy, as you may say, as usual, and my rheumatics were that bad, that I nearly sent Jonathan out to do my Christmas shopping.

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But Jonathan wouldn't hear of my not going ; he said he was no hand at bargains and such-like, and when I remembered how he went to the fishmongers' one day and asked them to cut him two chops off a codfish, I thought after all I had better go myself, and chance my rheumatics getting worse.

And I must say that when I got to the High Street and saw Father Christmas walking about with a tail of children at his heels, and all the turkeys dangling from the shop windows by their toes, and the meat all decorated with blue ribbons, I clean forgot my rheumatics and was downright glad I'd come.

Well, after I'd looked at the shops a bit, I went into the Stores to get a present for Henry, who is my first dead husband's brother. I always send Henry a present at Christmas-time, just to show him that however pleased I am with Jonathan, I haven't forgotten the one before.

My! there were some nice things in that shop and no mistake! I was fair dazzled by them all at first, but presently a young woman come along with a lot of pictures in her hand for me to look at, and after I'd picked them about a bit, I come across one with Moses sitting in the bulrushes, for $6\frac{3}{4}d$. It was a real nice picture, and the bulrushes were that life-like you almost wanted to pick them. Of course, Moses was a bit small, but what could you expect at his age, and being only $6\frac{3}{4}d$.

So I paid sevenpence for the picture and waited for my change, and would you believe it! the woman actually had the impudence to bring me a packet of pins instead of the money. "I don't want no pins," says I to her; "I want my farthing, what's mine by law." "We don't give it here," says she. "Don't you!" says I, "I'll soon see about that," which I did, and went and told the gentleman in the frock coat and glossy shirt-

front, as is always taking constitooshunals up and down the shop, and he called up another gentleman who went and found another, and then they all stood and talked together, and presently one of them came up and brought me my farthing. It took a bit of time to get it, I admit; but I won't never be put upen.

So then I took my parcel and went to the door to go out, but when I got there it was pouring with rain fit to drown a body. And just as I was wondering what I should do, with my rheumatics so bad and all, I saw a lot of umbrellas in a stand by the door. Says I to myself, "It was real kind of them to put those umbrellas there so as we shouldn't get wet," and I'd just picked out a nice one with a silver handle, and was putting it up, when a lady came running to me and snatched it out of my hand.

"That's mine," says she, "how dare you take it?" And before I could put in a word there was a regular crowd of people round us,

and they were all accusing me and saying as how I ought to go to prison, and making such a cackle about it, I felt downright silly. And presently someone said as how the master of the shop ought to be fetched, and while they were looking for him, I just stepped out of the shop.

It had stopped raining by then, but it made me feel that hot of thinking of being accused of stealing, when I never done such a thing in my life! So I walked along the street a bit to get cool, and while I was trying to make up my mind where I'd go next, I caught sight of a notice saying as how there was a Bankrupt Sale going on in the next street. If there's one thing I like better than another it is a sale, so in I popped.

The things were cheap there and no mistake! I got my sister's husband's cousin a fine Prayer Book for $4\frac{3}{4}d.$, which the man as served me said was worth tenpence, which it looked, with all the Ancient Hymns in it as

well as the Modern ones ; and next time the Minister gives out a hymn what no one's got in their books, Jim will be a proud man, for he'll be able to sing right up to eight hundred.

When I'd got that, I went off to another part of the shop to get Jonathan a butter dish what I'd been wanting for myself for a long time ; when I buy a present for Jonathan, I always try and get something that will do for the house ; it serves two purposes then. And while I was waiting for them to wrap it up, there on a shelf on the other side of the counter I saw the most lovely statue of John Wesley you ever set eyes on ! His nose was a bit chipped, and he'd lost an eye, but he was all right except for that, and he was only marked sixpence.

"To think of John Wesley going for that !" says I ; and then the shopman asked me if I wouldn't like to pay a little more for him, seeing as it was John Wesley, but I says "No," because although I think a lot of John

Wesley, I wasn't going to pay a shilling for him when I could get him for sixpence.

Well, just as I was walking down the steps out of the shop, that dratted string bag which I'd bought specially for my Christmas shopping broke right away, and all my things came out, and when I saw John Wesley rolling down those steps and bumping his head on every one of them, I could have cried.

"Oh, deary me!" I says, when I saw him lying at the bottom of the steps, for all I knew broken right up. "What's the matter?" says a lady who was just coming out of the shop. "Matter!" says I, "why John Wesley's fallen down those steps and very likely cracked his head." And then everybody ran up to know what had happened, and the lady asked me if John Wesley was my little boy and whether he'd been taken to the hospital, and when I told her John Wesley was a china statue what I'd just bought, she was downright rude to me,

and asked me what I meant by making such a fuss. But if John Wesley had cost her sixpence like he had me, I reckon she'd have spoke differently about him.

However, I picked up what was left of him, and went to get a penn'orth of gum, meaning to stick him together when I got back, but somehow the gum all ran out before I was home, and some of the things got regularly mixed up, and Jim wasn't able to sing anything beyond 301 after all, because all the hymns at the end got gummed together.

Most people would have been real vexed by that time, but I wasn't; as I says to myself, "You must expect things to go a bit contrary at Christmas-time." But I was that tired by everything that I could hardly feel my legs, at all, and I was just wondering how much a penny bun and a tuppenny cup of tea would come to, when I caught sight of a church all lit up inside

and the door wide open, on the other side of the road. So in I went to have a bit of a rest.

My! the singing was fine, it made me think of my first husband (not but what Jonathan does very well as a second), and we had a sermon all about Christmas, and being nice to people, and not only giving to those who can pay back what you send them.

And when the plate came round, I somehow felt as though I'd like to put something in it, being Christmas and all, but when I looked in my purse I'd nothing between a halfpenny and a sixpence, and I was just wishing I had a threepenny-bit when I remembered John Wesley. I thought to myself that it would be a change for the minister after having had so many coppers and such like, especially as he told us everything was acceptable if we gave it from our hearts, as you may say, so I

popped *him* in. But I couldn't help wishing he was less gummy; he must have been such a trouble to get off that plate.

Well, when the service was over I felt sort of touched up, and I somehow thought I'd be kind of easier if I was to give Jonathan something for himself instead of the butter-dish, so I off and changed it and got him a pair of braces, which no one could ever say I bought because I wanted them myself.

Of course, it was very queer the minister happening to say what he did about giving presents and such like; I can't help thinking he must have seen that butter-dish poking out of the paper under my arm, and guessed how I'd bought it for Jonathan, because of the house. Anyhow, I didn't want to be mean for a bit after that sermon, and so I went and got a card for Mrs. Smith, who lost her youngest boy last summer, and some toys for Matilda's children.

HOW I WENT SHOPPING.

When all that was done I was just worn out, so I got a penny bus which took me right to my own door.

And when I got home, I showed Jonathan all the things I'd bought and he was surprised. "They're finer than ever!" says he, and we went off together and took them round.

And I suppose it was because we felt so happy and Christmassy that we left so many of them at the wrong house, for Aunt Sarah, who hates children, got a rattle, and Matilda's baby a cookery book, and old David Dickson a woolly lamb. But the pictures and the rest of things went all right, and as I says to Jonathan, "Christmas is Christmas, and you must expect things to go a bit wrong, and for my part I like them to, it makes it seem more seasonable-like.

EXIT.

CONCERNING AEROPLANES.

CONCERNING AEROPLANES.

A Monologue.

"YES, 'ere I am, and a mercy it is! No more of your air-boatin' for me. I've done with all your new-fangled ways of gallivantin' about in the sky. Next time I wants to go for a trip, I'll take a penny bus; it's safer and cheaper, and don't take you where you don't want to go, nor leave you there when you gets there without any means of gettin' back again.

And I'll tell you summat else. If you ever saves anyone's life and they asks you what you wants for it, don't go and say, "A ride in an air-boat," like what I did. Not that

I meant to save anyone's life. I'm not that sort. I did it by mistake, as you may say.

I was a-walkin' along the 'Igh Street one day, not thinkin' of anythin' in pertic'ler, when all of a sudden, I sees a couple of 'orses comin' for me as 'ard as they could run, and tryin' to get out of their way, I stopped 'em. An' would you believe it! the man what was a-drivin' of 'em, acshully got down from the box an' said as 'ow I'd saved 'is life, which I'd never so much as thought of doin'. In course, I was too perlite to say so, besides it didn't seem worth while, with 'im so grateful an' all.

Well, 'e kep' shakin' my 'and an' thankin' me, till I got reg'ler dazed with it all, but when I 'eard 'im say as 'ow e'd make my forchun, I pricked up my ears an' began to think of all the things I wanted, becos I 'ates to miss a chance of makin' summat, an' times so bad too.

An' presently 'e tells me, quite casual like,

as 'ow 'e'd acshully got one o' them flying arrangements, what swim about in the clouds all by theirselves.

An' when I 'eard that, I was so took back, I was all of a tremble, becos' if there's one thing I'd always wanted more'n another, it was to 'ave a ride in one of them air-boat things.

"Oh, sir," says I, "if you'd only take me with you next time you goes up in the sky, you'd make me a proud man the rest of my days."

'E stared a bit when 'e 'eard that, an' I thought 'e wasn't goin' to do it, for all 'is fine promises.

"I misdoubt if you'd like it," says 'e after a bit, "it's rather alarmin'."

"Don't mention it, sir," says I, "I be a Volunteer when I was a boy, an' I ain't afeared of nothin', not even air-boats."

"Well," 'e says, "'t isn't 'xactly like Volunteerin', an' I don't know if you'd like it so well."

"Like it," says I, "it 'ud be like 'eaven!"

"I don't s'pose we shall get as far as that," says 'e; but I told 'im I didn't egspect it, though I knew those air-things did go up wonnerful 'igh, an' I don't deny as I thought as it would 'ave been weiry int'restin', if we could 'ave 'ad a peep o' the angels twangin' their 'arps an' such like.

So 'e talked, an' I talked, an' the more 'e tried to put me against it, the more I wanted to go, an' at last we fixed it up that I was to meet 'im at the Cross Roads next day, an' we was to go off together for a bit of a trip.

An' afore 'e left, 'e give me 'is card with 'is name printed on it, so as I should know who to look for if 'e wasn't at the Cross Roads, an' when I saw what was wiitten on the card, an' found as I'd been talkin' to a real lord all the time, without knowin' it, you could 'ave knocked me down with a feather! For 'e was a real lord! Think of that! If

I 'adn't seed it written down, I wouldn't never 'ave believed it, becous 'e looked for all the world like anybody else with a coat an' trousers on same as you or I'd wear.

An' when I got 'ome an' told my missus, she couldn't 'ardly believe it, an' when the neighbours 'eard as 'ow I was going out in an air-boat with a real lord, they was too taken aback to say anythin'.

An' next mornin', I set to, an' smartened myself up. I put on my new corderoys, an' a red tie, an' missus she give me a yeller rose for my button 'ole, an' a pot of grease for my 'ead. An' all the neighbours come to see me off, an' while we were waitin' for my lord to turn up, we all went to the Red Lion, an' they drank my 'ealth, an' I drank their 'ealth, an' we 'ad a reg'ler jubilation. An' just as we were goin to 'ave another 'arf pint, my lord 'e come along, an' I said good-bye to 'em all, an' kissed the missus, an' then I got up into the air-boat, an' my

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lord and I, we went a-sailin' up into the clouds just as if we was a couple of speerrits

Oh, it were fine at first! an' if I'd been the King 'isself, my lord couldn't 'ave talked nicer to me. But after a bit, I began to feel a bit queer; it didn't seem some'ow natural like for us to be up in the clouds like that, an' I didn't enjoy it near as much as I thought I should. "Don't you think it's time as we went back?" says I at last, "if we goes much 'igher, we may be interferin' with the angels," which I wouldn't never presoom to do, lord or no lord, 'owever anxious I might be feelin' to see what 'eaven was like.

Well, I s'pose my lord saw as 'ow I was lookin' werry uneasy, so after a bit we started to come down, an' whatever else I forgets, I'll remember that comin' down so long as I live. The way that air-boat be'aved was omethin' shockin', for she just went where

she liked an' my lord couldn't do nothin' with 'er. I used to think those underground arrangements were bad enough, but they bain't near so bad as sailin' about in the sky without no proper engine, nor lines, nor station, nor nothin' to tell you where you're goin' to.

An' first the air-boat she popped one way, an' then she popped another, till you didn't know where you were a-goin' next, an' every time we got near a bit of water, she sorter made for it, an' my lord got quite snappy when I told 'im as 'ow I couldn't swim. An' I was that frightened, I got all of a sweat an' a tremble, an' all my sins come up afore me, like the rector said they would.

"I do 'ope I'm saved," I says to myself ev'ry now an' then, but I 'ad my doubts, becos the rector said as 'ow I couldn't go to 'eaven an' to the Red Lion, an' I'd been to the Red Lion pretty often; an' I

wished I 'adn't 'ad that 'arf pint afore I started, becos a man doesn't want to go to 'eaven with 'is stummick full of beer, an' if I'd known what was goin' to 'appen, I'd 'ave gone to church on Sunday, 'stead of doin' t'other thing.

"Oh, I'll never touch another drop again, so long as I live," I kept a-sayin' to myself, becos the way that air-boat went up an' down made me think I might die any minit, an' I wanted to be on the safe side.

My lord didn't seem near so scared as I was. (I s'pose bein' a lord, 'e knew 'e'd be all right), an' he was downright angry with me for makin' a fuss.

"It's all right," 'e kep' a-sayin'.

"Seems to me," says I, "that what you means by 'all right' ain't what I means by it." An' I thought of that lovely tune I'd 'eard at the Band of 'Ope about 'avin' wings to fly from where you were, an' I'd 'ave given a good deal to 'ave 'ad them

wings just then, so as I could 'ave got away from that 'orrid air-boat.

"Be a man," says my lord, but I'd sooner 'ave been anythin' else just then, things bein' as they were. "You told me as you weren't afraid of nothin'."

"That may be," says I, "but I 'adn't been a-messin' in the skies like this then, I always kep' to the land." An' I began to wonder if you could 'ave a fun'ral if your body wasn't there. Merier an' I, we'd put by a tidy sum so as we could be buried proper, an' when I thought of myself all in little bits in the sky, I could 'ave wept. As I said to myself, "The Archangel Gabriel 'isself won't never think to look for an old man like me up 'ere."

"Good 'eavens!" says my lord all of a sudden, an' the air-boat give a sort of leap up in the air.

"Oh, not yet sir, not yet. I can't go without my missus an' all, I can't"—an'

then there was a sort of jerk, an' my lord said a word the rector won't let us pore folk say, an' the next thing I knew was that I was a-flyin' about in the sky without anything to 'old on to. An' after I'd been twirling about on my own account for a bit, I suddenly come down whack on somethin' soft, an' from the word 'e said when I did it, I knew that it was my lord I'd 'fallen on.

"Are we in 'eaven?" says I, all dazed-like.

"No," says my lord, quite sharp, and then 'e said somethin' which made me think we must be in the other place, but we weren't, for when I was able to look about a bit, there we were perched on the top of an 'ayrick, with cows an' such like walkin' about below us.

An when my lord come to 'isself again, as you may say, 'e set to an' 'e cussed that air-boat till you'd 'ave thought it was a 'uman bein'. I didn't feel up to cussin'

anythin' just then, so I just sat an' listened, an' wished I was at 'ome with my missus.

"Come, get up an' climb down," says my lord to me, when 'e'd said all 'e felt about the air-boat, but I was that sore, I couldn't 'ardly move at all.

"O, my pore back! my pore back!" says I, but my lord, 'e didn't pay no attention to me, bein' too much took up with 'isself, an' there I 'ad to scramble off that rick as best I could, an' I was so upset I never thought to look for my gamp, what must have dropped from the clouds about the same time as I did.

I carn't ardly remember what 'appened after that. I know as I told my lord as I wished I never saved 'is life or set eyes on 'is air-boat, an' my lord, well, 'e didn't say much, but what 'e said was werry strong, an' he said that word again, what the rector won't let us use. In course it was aggravatin' of that air-boat to be'ave as she did, but she

turned up in a field next day, an' bein' a bit 'urt, stayed there till my lord fetched 'er. An' as I said to my lord afterwards, p'raps it was all a sort of 'int from 'eaven that they don't want us messin' on their premises yet.

"Well, Silas," says the missus when I got 'ome, "'an 'ow 'ave you enjoyed yourself?"

"Well," says I, "it depends on what you calls enjoyment," and then I told 'er all about it.

I don't deny I 'ad a bit of a scare, an' I ain't been to the Red Lion since.

An' when all the neighbours come to know all about it, I says to 'em, "The land's good enough for me, an' I prefers to wait till I'm an angel afore I goes any more flyin' excursions."

EXIT.

THE WAYS OF A WAYWARD
WOMAN.

THE WAYS OF A WAYWARD WOMAN.

A Monologue for Sentimental Maidens.

(*Entering left, holding bouquet, and singing ad. lib.*) "The flowers that bloom in the Spring, tra la," . . . Oh, dear! I do feel so ridiculously happy this morning, I never knew before what a lovely place the world was to be in! Why, I've seen carnations all my life, and yet I never noticed till this morning how beautiful they were, and it is the same with everything. Yesterday, I hadn't anything I wanted, and to-day there doesn't seem anything left to want. People talk of dying of happiness, but I feel as though I'd

like to live for ever—and then I shouldn't have had enough.

I suppose I needn't tell you what is the matter with me? I'm not mad you know, only very, very happy.

Isn't it funny? I always used to think the poor so stupid, because they were for ever writing about love. Now I know that they were right, because it is the only thing worth writing about.

(Catching sight of flowers.) Poor flowers! I must give you some water at once. You mustn't die to-day at any rate. *(Smiling.)* All the same, I mustn't let Dick send me any more. I like Dick, of course, but—well, things are different now. You see, I've had lots of admirers, but after to-day I'm only going to have one, and he will be Jack. I've had lots of lovers too, but after to-day I only mean to have one, and he will be Jack too. Dear me! that sounds quite solemn, doesn't it? but somehow I do feel rather solemn. Paradise

is a bit bewildering just at first, especially when you feel you really haven't done anything to deserve such happiness.

The strange thing is that when I first met Jack I didn't like him a bit. I was awfully rude to him, you know, until one day when—well, I wasn't! And ever since that day I've been wondering how on *earth* I managed to live before I met him. And yesterday Jack was perfectly horrid to me. He was so depressed and miserable that I—I nearly cried, only I'd never done it before *him*, and I wasn't sure how he'd like it. And then, just as he was leaving he told me he'd something he must say to me, and asked if he might come and see me again. And suddenly I knew why he had been so quiet, and somehow I liked him all the better for it. (*Dreamily.*) And he's coming this morning!

And that's why I don't mean to have any more flowers from Dick, or notes from Laurie, or attentions from any of them, except one.

You see, when Jack asks me to be his wife, I want to be able to look him straight in the face when I say "Yes," and I don't want him to find out "things" about me afterwards, like they do in books. I want to play fair and start fair with him, without the feeling that there is any other man in the background who can ever come between us.

So I'm going to bury the past before he comes, and then I shall have nothing to think of but the present and the future—the glorious future!

Let me see. (*Takes out of desk a miscellaneous collection of photographs, letters, and faded flowers, &c.*) Dick's photographs. (*Counts.*) One, two, three, four. Well, it won't be much of a compliment to Jack if I decorate my boudoir with photographs of previous admirers, so I think I'll burn three of these.

That's where the difference lies. Before a woman falls in love, every man is interesting

to her, and afterwards, with the exception of the one, the rest seem to sink into utter insignificance. (*Looking at photographs.*) Now which shall I keep? (*Reads from photo.*) "Dolly from Dick." H'm! nothing much in that. (*Looks at back of photo.*) Oh, gracious! It really must go after all. If the merit of Dick's poetry is uncertain, the meaning is very clear. Poor old Dick! Fancy his wanting to marry me! Why, I know him far too well. For that matter, I know Jack better, but then Jack is full of surprises, bless him! He's just enough of the devil in him to make him interesting, and enough goodness to make him perfect.

Ah! (*picking up a piece of heather*) white heather, given me by Gerald Marsden for luck and also as a proof of his affection. Well, I've got all the luck I want now, and as I have also got someone else's affection, I don't think I need keep that any longer. (*Throws it into basket.*)

(*Taking up mask*) The mask I wore at the Melton's fancy ball. I danced with a man in a red domino nearly the whole evening, and the funny thing is, I never found out who he was, because he disappeared just when the time for unmasking came. I've often meant to try and discover his name, and write and ask him to call, but each time I remembered Jack, and I didn't. Some day I shall tell Jack of all the sacrifices I've made on his account.

(*Picks up chicken bone laughing*) The wishing-bone pulled with Captain Langley the night he left home for India! I remember I wished (*mock sentimentally*) that he might be true to me as long as I was true to him. (*Laughing.*) That was a much more sensible wish of mine than I ever dreamt at the time. (*Picks up bundle of letters.*) Laurie's letters! Really, considering he's over forty and our correspondence has been of a strictly platonic character, we've written pretty

frequently. I wish (*pauses*)—No, I simply won't keep *one* of them. (*Throws them into basket.*) Laurie will miss my letters I'm afraid, but in any case I shouldn't have any time to write to him now.

there they all are ! Somehow, you know, I feel quite an affection for them, and if it wasn't for Jack I don't believe any power on earth would make me burn them. Lots of times, when I've felt a bit lonely, I've taken them out and laughed over some and cried over others, till somehow I've felt quite happy again. Of course, every woman likes to be reminded of her conquests, but it isn't altogether that. It is, I think, because every woman is lonely, even though she may not know it, until she meets her fate, and so I thought that if I never married, then when I was an old, old woman, more lonely than ever, these would help me to forget the dreary present in remembering the happy past.

Dear me ! I never knew before how serious happiness makes one ! (*Bending over basket.*) Well, good-bye dears, and bless you ! (*Ring heard off.*) Gracious ! There he is ! I've only just finished in time.

(Ecstatically.) He's coming! He's coming!
Oh, what shall I do? *(Knock heard off—
she goes to door and takes note.)* A letter
from him? I suppose he hadn't the courage
to come himself *(opens note and reads aloud)*:

"Dear Miss Meadows,

"I meant to have come to see you
to-day, but circumstances have made it
impossible. I am sure you will be glad to
hear that I have had an excellent appointment
offered me in Calcutta, and as my ship sails
shortly, I fear I shall not have an opportunity
of coming to wish you good-bye. I am sorry
our friendship must come to an end, but I
shall always remember the many pleasant
hours I have spent in your society.

"Yours sincerely,

"JOHN CARTWRIGHT."

(In a whisper) What does it mean? It
can't mean that. He couldn't be so cruel?

(*Reads again.*) "I'm sorry that our friendship must come to an end." (*Passionately*) So now that he wants to get out of it, he cheats himself into thinking we've been merely friends all this time. I wonder he didn't say acquaintances. Do you break all your engagements to catch a glimpse of—a friend? Do you think and plan nothing else all day but how to please—a friend? Do you dress, act, *live*, just to please—a friend? That's what I've been doing, and he accepted it from me—in the name of friendship, it appears.

Oh! what a fool I've been! Now I see why he never gave me flowers like Laurie, or sent me notes like Dick, or wrote me a line, or paid me a single attention that could in any way compromise him. He was using me for amusement only, while I—oh, I can hear what everyone will say. "Poor Dolly! she did her best to catch Jack Cartwright, but he just saved himself by going abroad."

That must have been the news he was coming to tell me to-day. I suppose he was afraid I should make a scene, and so sent a note instead. He needn't have feared.

I needn't have been in such a hurry to bury the past. Well, there'll be one more letter to add to my collection now. (*Takes Jack's letter and begins to tear it. She pauses on turning over the sheet.*) Why, what's this? (*Reads*) "Dear Miss Meadows, I ought to go away without saying a word, but I can't. By this time you will have heard the news, and will understand why I must leave England and find work at once. I mustn't even come to wish you good-bye. If I did, I might forget myself, and if I am a beggar I need not be——," Oh dear, I can't read the next word. (*To audience, looking at letter again.*) Now, what on earth is the meaning of this? (*Turns over sheet.*) And gracious! here is another on the c
(*Reads*) "Can you love a man

a penny in the world, and has nothing to offer you?"— and then it is all crossed out.

What does it mean? Three letters, all about the same thing, each with a different meaning? (*Pause.*) Why, he must have been trying to make up his mind what to say to me, and has sent me all the rough copies he made in mistake for the real letter. But which does he mean to stand by? Does he want me to choose which I like? Or is it that he won't see me because he doesn't love me, or *does* love me and therefore won't see me? And why shouldn't he see me?

(*Telephone bell rings.*) Oh, dear! just as I'm worried to death. (*Goes and takes out receiver.*) Yes, it's me, all right. You're Dick, aren't you? Yes, they are lovely! I've just put them in water. Thanks so much, may I let you know. (*Eagerly.*) What did you say? No, I haven't heard? (*Listens.*) (*To audience.*) It's about Jack. He's lost

all his money. So that was the reason of his letters. (*To telephone.*) And you say he's quite ruined. Oh, I *am* so glad. What? No, of course, I don't mean that, only—It's no good, I can't talk sensibly to you now. Come to tea to-morrow, and I'll tell you all about it. (*Puts back receiver.*)

(*Laughing.*) Dick must think I'm mad! So that was it. Jack has lost his money, and thinks he's lost me too. How could he be so dense! As if I cared for such a silly thing as money, especially as I've more than I want as it is.

Now, what shall I do? Here are three letters, one of which I'm going to answer. The question is, which one? (*Smiling.*) I'll choose the last, which he obviously didn't mean me to see, as it's all crossed out. (*Sits down and writes rapidly*): "Dear Jack, please come and see me at once" (*putting letter into envelope.*) There! I'm throwing myself at his head with a vengeance. Parson

shall take this, and when Jack comes, I'll show him all three letters and ask him which he meant me to have. Though I know which I mean to have, and that's the main point,

EXIT.

THE MARTYRDOM OF AN ANTI-
SUFFRAGETTE.

THE MARTYRDOM OF AN ANTI-SUFFRAGETTE.

A Monologue.

I shall never get over it, never, so long as I live! To think that I, Sarah Jenkins, mother of thirteen children and three husbands, two being buried, of course, got taken up by the police and nearly sent to gaol! I don't feel as though I'd ever get it out of my mind—not if I was to live to be as old as Methuselah, what I don't suppose I never will.

It was all because of the "Happy Mothers" (which is the Society as I belong to), starting late for their outing on Thursday last. They said they were going to start from The Golden Horn at

10 o'clock, and if I'd be at the corner of my street at a quarter-past, they'd pick me up.

Well, there I was at the time they said, waiting for them, and after a few minutes, I sees a sort of covered cart coming along with a lot of females inside it. Well, of course I thought they were the "Happy Mothers," so I waved my hand at them, and they waved back at me, and stopped and asked me if I was one of their party, and I said I was, and I got in and away we went.

Well, when I'd settled myself and began to look round, I didn't seem to recognise any of the people there. They all looked too young and pretty to please me. And after a bit, they began to talk, and oh! the shameful things they said, all about women and their noble ways, and says I to myself, "These may be the 'Happy Mothers' but they don't behave like it," and indeed some

of them looked so young and flighty, it was quite impossible to think of them being married at all.

However, I tried to be as affable as I could, seeing as how we had to spend the day together, but they didn't listen to a word I said, but just kept on talking about some house or other they wanted to break into, which I thought downright disgraceful.

And there I had to sit and listen to all their silly cackle. And then one of them actually said as how she was glad there were still a few single-minded women left in the world, which I took it was a back-hander at me, as I had been looking pretty glum at all their talk, so just spoke up and told them I was no more single than they were, being married upwards of nineteen years. "What's more," says I, meaning to make 'em feel small, "I've thirteen children, what I don't suppose any of you have, nor three husbands neither."

"Oh you poor thing!" says one of those impudent females. "Poor thing indeed!" says I, "I'll thank you to take your pity where it's wanted. Why, if we weren't mothers, we wouldn't be here to-day."

"What do you mean?" asked one of them.

"What I says," says I, and just then the cart stopped and they all began to get up.

"Where have we got to?" says I.

"We're at the House," says she.

"What House?"

"Why the House of Commons."

And then I learnt that they weren't the "Happy Mothers" at all, but a party of female suffragettes, come together to commit some awful crime. I'd got into the wrong brake!

And I was that upset when I heard that, that I fell clean over the steps trying to get out, and down I went. Well, when

I picked myself up, I found myself in the middle of the most awful crowd of women you ever set eyes on! There were all sorts, and they all had a sort of desperate look on their faces that made me want to get out of their way as quick as I could, but they crowded up so I got regular jammed.

And then one of those female suffragettes came along with a banner which kept blowing right across me and getting in my way. "Don't you go a flapping your wickedness in my face," says I to her, getting downright aggravated with her at last, but all she did was to hand me a paper all about their wicked ways, which I just handed back.

"Well!" says I to myself, "if I stays here much longer I shall be taken for one of *them*," but they were making such a noise and crushing me up so, I couldn't move an inch, and when I tried to get the other

side of a policeman, he pushed me back. I wasn't going to have that, so I pushed him forward.

"Don't you do that," says he, "or you'll be taken up."

"Let me pass," says I, but he wouldn't, and just then I caught sight of a railing near me, so up I nipped, meaning to get out the other side. But he didn't seem to like that, and he called to two other policemen to come and help him pull me down. That made me real downright angry, and I just caught hold of a spike to keep my balance, and there I sat and kept them off with my umbrella.

"You'll have to come along with me, when you do come down," says one of them, *trying to get me away.*

"Then I'll thank you to leave my ankles alone till I do," I replied.

"You're a suffragette, you are, and no mistake," says he.

"If you go mixing me up with those female women," says I, "I'll tell my husband"—and just then someone gave me a push and I lost my seat and fell off my spike into the crowd.

And when I looked at myself again, there I was sitting on the pavement with my placket-hole all torn and two policemen holding me. And, while I was talking to them, a gentleman came along and asked me for my name and address, and said that he would like to take my photograph for his paper, and I was just going to have a nice little chat with him when those dratted policemen said I must go with them.

"You leave me alone," says I, feeling a bit annoyed at being interrupted like that, and him such an affable gentleman too.

But they wouldn't listen to a word I said, although I told them as I was one of the "Happy Mothers," and had thirteen husbands and three children, and that I'd have the

law on them, and all the threatening things I could think of, but it wasn't no good. And there I had to walk along the public street with my placket-hole all torn and my umbrella took away from me. They wouldn't even wait while I pinned myself together.

If I'd been suddenly swallowed up by an earthquake I couldn't have been more scared. And presently one of those impudent women came up to me. "Don't take it like that," says she. "It's all for a good cause."

"Cause!" says I, "I never gave them no cause."

And just as I was getting downright desperate, who should I see on the other side of the road but the minister of our chapel. Oh, I was that glad to see him, I just hollered after him as loud as I could.

'Oh, sir, for pity's sake, save me!" cries I.

along the police they tried to make me stop

"You but I wouldn't, not till I'd made mistake," s^turn round.

"Oh, sir," says I, when he got alongside of me, "I know I'm a miserable sinner, but I ain't done nothing but get mixed up with those female suffragettes what I hate and detest." And then I told him all about it, and he told the police, and the end of it was they let me go off with him, after he'd promised them as he'd see me home.

And while we walked home, I told the minister something about those female women and their ways.

"That's a very strong description, Mrs. Jenkins," says he, when I'd finished.

"It may be, sir," says I, "but, begging your pardon, I'd make it stronger if I could."

And when Jenkins saw my photograph in the papers this week with me sitting on a spike and a policeman on each side of me, he was downright dangerous for a bit.

And that's how I got taken up—and I tell you I always was against women having votes, but after what I've been through I

says, that if anyone ever dares to take away my character by mixing me up with those female suffragettes, I'll get Jenkins to knock 'em down!

EXIT.

A MAN AND HIS METHOD.

A MAN AND HIS METHOD.



A Duologue.

GREGORY ELLERTON,	Husband
	and
FRANCES ELLERTON,	Wife.

Scene: Any room. *Time:* Morning.

(FRANCES *discovered on her knees, turning over the contents of the waste-paper basket.*)

OH, dear! What on earth I'm going to do, Heaven only knows! Was ever woman in such a plight before? (*Dramatically.*) Three bank-notes, lost; absolutely lost—and I don't know where they are. I haven't got the numbers of them or anything, and there'll be a deficit of £15 in my accounts (*sighing*),

and Gregory is sure to notice it. He always does notice little things like that. Why, it isn't even as if he were an ordinary person. He's not. Ever since we've been married, and that's three years, he's never lost a single thing, not even a stud. Oh! it's *awful* being married to a man like that.

(*Despairingly.*) Why am I always so unlucky? You know, I only just put those notes down for a moment while I ran upstairs to fetch something, and when I came back, would you believe it, they were gone!

(*Thoughtfully.*) Now let me see: What did I do this morning? I know. I put the room tidy first. (*Sighing.*) It's always the same. Whenever I put the room tidy, I can never find anything in it for a week afterwards. Oh! how I loathe, hate, and abominate tidiness in any shape or form.

(*Hoplessly.*) I've looked everywhere. In the house, in the garden, in the dustbin. Oh! I've spent hours on my knees before that

dustbin (*looking at hands*), and it was horrid. All the dogs of the neighbourhood came and sniffed round me while I dived among the rubbish. I suppose they thought I was looking for a bone. Whenever I've lost anything really important, you know, I always go straight to the dustbin first. Why, only last week I found one of our apostle spoons there, though how on earth it got there I don't know.

(*Sighing.*) Oh dear! I wonder where those notes are? (*Suddenly.*) Perhaps they blew out of the window. It was open, and now I come to think of it, I left a lot of papers and things about on the table after I'd tidied up. (*In resigned tone.*) I expect that's it. They've been carried away by the wind and cashed by this time. I don't suppose it's any good, but I may as well ask Emily. (*Goes R. and calls off.*) "Emily, you didn't happen to see three bank-notes blowing down the street, did you?" (*Listens and returns centre.*) (*In exasperated tones.*) That girl never notices

anything. (*Despairingly.*) Oh, dear! I couldn't feel more miserable if I were dead.

ENTLR GREGORY.

G. (*looking at Frances*). Hullo! What's the matter?

F. Nothing. Why?

G. Well, you look rather as though you'd just had a great bereavement.

F. Perhaps I have. (*Rising.*) I think I'll go and tell cook about lunch.

EXIT FRANCES.

G. Poor little woman! I feel rather a brute, but I had to teach her a lesson. The way she leaves her things about is really dreadful. Only this morning I discovered her notes lying on the mantel-piece, of all places in the world, so I've just taken them, to give her a fright and make her more careful in future. I've got them here (*taking out pocket book*), and when —(*opening pocket-book*), Good Heavens! they're not here! I've lost them. (*Turns*
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out pockets, &c.) They *must* be somewhere. Why, I only had them a few moments ago. (*Thoughtfully.*) I remember putting them in an envelope for safety and then I—Confound it all! Where can they be? It's too ridiculous!

ENTER FRANCES.

F. (*looking at GREGORY, who remains standing in the centre of the room staring at his pocket-book.*) Why, Gregory?

G. Yes.

F. Anything wrong?

G. Of course not.

F. (*ironically.*) You haven't had a bereavement, have you?

G. (*absently.*) Certainly not. I can't put my hand on it for the moment, that's all.

F. What?

G. (*still looking at pocket-book.*) . . . tell you it's all right. I shall come across it in a moment.

F. But, Gregory?

G. It can't be far off, because I only had it a moment ago.

F. What do you mean? Why! *(In delighted tones.)* Can it really be that *you* have lost something? Wonders will never cease.

G. No I have not; I don't quite know where I put it; but it is not lost.

F. *(aside).* What a coincidence!

G. What's that you were saying?

F. I was wondering where it was. What is it like?

G. Oh! it's only an envelope.

F. Oh! then it doesn't matter if you don't find it.

G. Well er—it's a letter, that is, not exactly a letter, but a sort of a letter. *(F. begins to laugh.)* I'm glad it amuses you. Personally, I see nothing amusing in the loss of a valuable paper. *(Angrily.)* With this room in such a disgracefully

untidy state, it is impossible to find anything. It is like a pig-sty.

F. It is *not* like a pig-sty, and if it is, I prefer it. At any rate it's comfortable. I always was untidy. Mamma was before me. If you read Ibsen, you'd know it was hereditary.

G. It is the duty of every married woman to be methodical and orderly in her habits.

F. I *hate* method, and I hate methodical people. I'd sooner be a pig and live in a pig-sty than be a methodical person.

G. It is most annoying! My papers are always being lost or mislaid owing to your carelessness. Only last week you used two of my most important letters for making spills.

F. Well, my dear Gregory, if I'd known what bad spills they would have made, I should never have used them.

G. How many more times am I to remind

you that a husband's papers should be sacred in the eyes of his wife? She should make it her object in life to guard each one of them jealously.

F. Even the bills!

G. Your flippancy is in the worst possible taste. Even if you have no method yourself, you need not despise it in others. (FRANCES *yawns*.) You apparently do not realize what it means to lose a valuable paper.

F. Oh yes, I do. I've lost all mine.

G. Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You are most careless. People have no business to lose things. It is quite unnecessary.

F. But you said you'd lost——

G. (*furiously*). How many more times am I to tell you, I have *not* lost it. I have only mislaid it.

F. That's what I always do, but it comes to the same thing in the end.

G. It does not come to the same thing at all, either at the beginning or the end. Being a woman, you cannot, of course, be expected to see the difference, neither can you be expected to realize what a man's papers are to him. They are his life, his all, his ——(*irritably*). You need not sit there and laugh like that. I tell you this letter must be found.

F. But it's all so screamingly funny

G. Really (*meaningly*.) You, above all people, ought to be the first to wish me to find this—er—letter.

F. Why?

G. (*embarrassed*). Because it is your duty as a wife—when anything is lost—to——

F. I thought you said it wasn't lost.

G. How many more times am I to tell you that it is *not*——

F. (*interrupting*). Then why worry further?

G. I shall go and——

F. (*interrupting*). It's no good looking in the dustbin, I've been there.

G. You've been where?

F. (*forgetting herself*). I was looking for the notes of course.

G. (*in feigned surprise*). Do you mean to tell me you've lost, actually lost, those notes I gave you only yesterday?

F. No, dear, I certainly did *not* mean to tell you. It just popped out before I knew what I was saying. (*Coaxingly*) I'm very sorry, truly, Gregory. It shan't happen again, and I'll turn over a new leaf.

G. You're always saying that.

F. Yes, I know (*sighing*). It will be the fourth new leaf I've had to turn this week.

G. You're incorrigibly careless.

F. I can't think where they are. You don't know, I suppose?

G. No, I don't.

- F. (*sighing*). I wish you did.
- G. (*with emphasis*). So do I.
- F. I thought at first perhaps you'd hidden them for a joke. (GREGORY goes to fireplace and pokes fire vigorously.) (*Sadly*) I suppose if they're really and truly lost, I can't get the money for them?
- G. Certainly not
- F. Oh dear! (*Sighs heavily.*)
- G. (*after a pause*). Look here, Frances, I don't approve of your carelessness, but I'll overlook it this time, and if you'll find this—er—letter for me, I'll—well, I'll make good those notes you've lost.
- F. (*ecstatically*). Gregory! Will you really? You are a darling! (*Goes up to him and kisses him.*)
- G. But you must find the letter first, remember.
- F. Oh! that's all right. I can always find other people's things. It's only my own I can never find, What's it like?

- G. Oh, a blue envelope, without any name or anything on it. It's sealed, of course. (*Telephone bell rings.*) Confound it! That must be Hawkins come about the motor.
- F. (*gaily*). Run away, and when you come back I'll have that letter for you. (GREGORY *prepares to exit*. FRANCES *runs up to him and kisses him again.*) You are good.
- G. (*embarrassed*). Not at all. That's all right. That's all right.

EXIT GREGORY.

- F. Now where shall I look first (*Goes to writing-table and turns over papers, &c.*) Gregory really was sweet about those notes. I never thought he would take it like that. (*Thoughtfully*) "An envelope, with a sort of a letter inside it." H'm! It sounds as if that sort of a letter might prove rather interesting.

I wonder——! He seemed very anxious about it. I wonder——!

ENTER GREGORY.

G. Hullo! Found it?

F. No. But I shall in a minute. Is it a very important letter, Gregory?

G. Well, yes, it is rather.

F. What's in it?

G. Oh—er—only business.

F. Yes, but—what sort of business?

G. Oh—er—just business. Nothing you'd understand!

F. (*aside, significantly*). I'm not so sure of that (*catching sight of blue envelope, and holding it up triumphantly*). What's this?

G. Ah, that's it (*stretching out his hand to take it*). Thanks, little woman.

F. (*holding it away from him, and singing*).
'Here's a thing and a very pretty thing,
and who's the owner of this pretty
thing?'

- G. (*smiling*). I am. (*Again tries to take it.*)
- F. (*still holding envelope away from him.*)
(*Playfully*) Not yet, sir; I want to see what's in this letter that makes it so valuable.
- G. (*hastily*) Nonsense! Let me have it, and I'll run and get the notes.
- F. Oh, no, no, no, no, no, good sir. You shan't have it till you tell me.
- G. (*alarmed*). Don't be silly, Frances, give it me at once.
- F. Tell me what's in it then.
- G. How foolish you are. Don't I keep telling you it's only business.
- F. Business! A nice comprehensive term which covers everything and tells me nothing.
- G. Really, I wish you'd mind yours. You are making yourself quite ridiculous! (*Coarsely*) You're much too pretty, little woman, to bother your head about all my stupid business letters,
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Besides, it's of no importance. None whatever.

F. Oh, I thought you said it was.

G. (*Confused*). Oh—er—did I? Well, it is in a way important, but in another it isn't. (*Irritably*) Hang it, Frances, it's nothing to do with you.

F. I'm beginning to think it has a good deal to do with me. (*Firmly*) Anyhow you're going to tell me.

G. Then you're wrong, because I'm not

F. (*meaningly*). Very well.

G. You wouldn't understand if I did.

F. Thank you, I think I do understand without your telling me.

G. Why, Frances, you're surely not going to be silly. It's simply too foolish to mind just because I don't choose to show you all my correspondence. It's absurd! Why, a man must have many letters he does not worry his wife with.

F. (*furiously*.) Pardon me! There is only

one kind of letter he refuses to worry his wife with when she asks him, and that is the kind he receives from another woman.

G. Frances, I am ashamed of you.

F. Show me the letter then, and prove that I am wrong.

G. I can't.

F. Exactly.

G. (*after long pause, tearing open envelope and flinging it on table, thus disclosing the notes*). There, now I hope you're satisfied!

F. (*with a cry of surprise*). My notes! Gregory!

G. I repeat, I hope you are satisfied.

F. But, Gregory! I don't understand? These are my notes, the notes I lost yesterday.

G. (*trying to speak coolly*) Quite so. I found them lying about and I took care of them for you.

F. (*bewildered*). Took care of them for me. But you said you'd lost (*sharply*)—now I understand your extraordinary generosity in offering to make good my notes if I found your letter for you. Really, Gregory, I wonder the earth didn't open and swallow you up when you talked about those notes. (*Furiously*) You're—you're a perfect Sapphira.

G. It's ridiculous to talk like that, and all I can say is that I consider it exceedingly impertinent of you to have insisted on seeing a private letter.

F. Private letter indeed! (*Beginning to laugh.*) And I thought it was from another woman, when all the time—(*goes off into a series of chuckles*).

G. (*sulkily*). Your want of confidence in me has hurt me very deeply.

F. Poor old boy. (*Laughing.*) Oh, dear! To think that *you*, the immaculate Gregory, the man of method, actually

mislaid three bank-notes ! What *want* of method, Gregory, not to know where you put them. (GREGORY *mutters to himself.*) But there, I'm going to be magnanimous. You've behaved shockingly to me, but I'm going to overlook it, I'm even——

G. But you don't seem to realize that——

F. (*interrupting*). Yes I do. I quite realize that I ought to be very, very angry with you. I'm not sure I oughtn't to divorce you for it. People do in plays you know. But I won't. Although you've deceived me, I'll——

G. I did *not* deceive you ; I only——

F. (*warningly*). Remember Sapphira, Gregory. Really, the way you trifle with your life is simply dreadful. Must I remind you again that if you're not careful, the earth will open and swallow you up or else you'll drop down dead, I forget which, but I know

... it's one of the two, and perhaps it's both.

G. (*furiously*). I wish you to understand that I——

F. (*interrupting*). I do understand, Gregory, but I've said I'll forgive you, and I will. I won't even ask you to turn over a new leaf, or start again, or anything. You must have inherited your deceitfulness from your father, just as I have inherited my untidiness from my mother, and I must bear with it. Only, next time you want to deceive me, *remember Sapphira*. (*Goes up to GREGORY who turns sulkily away.*) After all, Gregory, though you are deceitful and I am untidy, we don't get on so very badly together, do we?

G. No, but——

F. Then that's all right. And you're going to put up with me, and I'm going to put up with you, and we're going to

MONOLOGUES AND DUOLOGUES.

be happy together for ever and ever
Amen.

G. (*relaxing*). Will you never be serious?

F. Never. And I tell you what. There's
only one way to avoid losing money,
and that is by spending it. We'll
go and dine somewhere and change
the notes, and then we shan't have
them to lose.

G. (*smiling*). Don't be too sure of that.

F. Well, you may say what you like, but
so long as I have you, I don't care
what else I lose. (GREGORY *bends to kiss*
her.) Gregory, you mustn't do that.
Can't you see people looking at us?
(*Laughing.*) And you a man of method!

G. Exactly. (*Kissing her.*) This is part
of the method

CURTAIN.